

People in motion



Location: Sikeston, Mo.

Position: Senior materials inspector, Southeast District

Background: Graham is a 34-year Missouri Department of Transportation veteran who started his career in Maintenance in 1969 and transferred to Construction a short time later.

“When I started in Construction, we were busy building Interstate 55 in southeast Missouri. I spent a great deal of time on the segment of I-55 from Portageville to the Arkansas state line,” Graham says.

During his nine years in Construction, Graham also worked building I-155 in Pemiscot County and the Mississippi River Bridge into Dyersburg, Tenn.

“I’ve been fortunate to have been a part of several major projects,” Graham says. “It’s gratifying to know that I’ve been part of the team that constructed our interstate system along with some major river bridges.”

The Job: As senior materials inspector, most of Graham’s time is currently spent inspecting items used in the construction of the new Bill Emerson Memorial Bridge that is well on its way to spanning the Mighty Mississippi River between Cape Girardeau, Mo., and East Cape Girardeau, Ill.

A wide variety of materials must be inspected on the new bridge, but Graham says the concrete is probably the most repeatedly inspected item simply because of the sheer volume.

“Inspecting the consistency of the concrete is an enormous part of our inspection program for this monumental job,” Graham says. “We must test the concrete to ensure that the mix we receive from local suppliers meets or exceeds strict state and federal guidelines. We have a responsibility to make sure Missouri’s taxpayers are getting what they pay for.”

By Angela Wilson

Photography by Gary Reinhart

Dale Graham

Besides the massive volumes of concrete used to construct the towers and piers, the bridge deck has also been an interesting aspect of the inspection program.

The bridge deck is actually being built in Memphis, Tenn., and floated by barge up the Mississippi River in 192 sections. The slabs are 44 feet wide, 16 feet long and 11 inches thick.

Graham adds, “I supervise and inspect the casting of the deck panels. These panels are extremely important and require very strict MoDOT involvement since they will support the traffic on the bridge.”

How It’s Done: The types of inspection performed by Graham and the team of MoDOT inspectors are determined by a wide variety of state and federal specification documentation manuals, individual project designs and special provisions that are included as part



of contracts MoDOT awards. Graham’s inspections don’t just occur during normal working hours. He must be on-site during overnight concrete pours, weekend work and whenever new materials are being used.

“So much of my time over the last few years has been devoted to the quality of

materials being used in the construction of the new Emerson Bridge that this experience will stay with me forever,” he says.

Favorite Part of the Job: “I really enjoy meeting so many different people and being able to get out in the field and work on my own without a great deal of supervision.”

After Hours: He spends his time away from MoDOT hunting and fishing. He also enjoys visiting with his grandkids – Mollie, Kari and Hunter. ■

Angela Wilson is the Public Information and Outreach manager at MoDOT’s Southeast District.